MASTERPIECES

OF

GERMAN POETRY

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OF

GERMAN POETRY.

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Schiller Goethe

MASTERPIECES

OF

GERMAN POETRY.

TRANSLATED

IN THE MEASURE OF THE ORIGINALS

BY

F. H. HEDLEY.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY LOUIS WANKE.

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TO

OTTOMAR HAUPT, Esq.,

This Volume

IS DEDICATED AS A TOKEN OF

A FRIEND'S AFFECTION,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

917919

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The Song of the Bell.

SCHILLER.

Vivos voco
Mortuos plango,
Fulgura frango.

In the earth immured and grounded,
Stands the mould of harden'd clay.
This day shall the Bell be sounded!
Quick, my men, then work away.
From the heated brow,
Must the dew-drops flow,
If the work should praise our merit;
Blessings we from Heav'n inherit.

The work, o'er which we're gravely bending,
With earnest words we'll gravely greet;
With seemly speech its progress blending,
Will make it speed on nimble feet.
Then let us now with care endeavour
To show what feeble strength can frame,

And scorn the wretched man who never
Premeditates his labour's aim.
The noblest treasure man possesses—
And therefore was he crown'd with thought—
Is, that within his heart's recesses,
He feels what with his hand he wrought.

Take the pine-tree's sturdy stem,
But well season'd let it be,
That the concentrated flame
Rush along the brazen sea
Fling the copper in,
Quick then add the tin,
That the metal's tough alloy,
Fusing crown our hopes with joy.

What here the busy hand is framing,
With fire's aid beneath the ground,
High in the belfry, loud proclaiming,
'T will tell of us with booming sound.
And still, in distant ages tolling,
To many hearts it will appeal,
With many mourners be condoling,
With solemn chorus blend its peal.
And what unto the earth-born mortal,
The changeful tide of fortune brings,

That striketh at the brazen portal,
And solemnly it onward rings.

See! white bubbles are up-oozing;
Well! the metal 's melting fast,
Salts, the molten mass infusing,
Will accelerate the cast.
But of cinders free,
Let the mixture be,
So that from the unblemish'd Bell
Rich and clear the voice may swell.

For with a glad and festive sound,
The chimes upon the infant creep,
When, on its life's first mission bound,
'T is borne upon the arm of sleep.
On time's unfathomable breast
Its dark and happy fortunes rest;
Its mother's love and tender sorrow
Watch fondly o'er each golden morrow;
The years on rapid pinions fleet.
The boy parts proudly from the maiden,
Forth rushing into life's campaign,
The world he measures lightly laden;
A stranger, he comes home again;
And sweetly in her beauty's prime,
As formed upon celestial strands,

With blushing cheeks and grace sublime,
The virgin now before him stands.
And a delicious, nameless longing
Comes o'er the youth; alone he strays;
The tear-drops to his eyes are thronging,
He shuns his brother's noisy ways,
With blushes he her steps o'ertraces,
Enraptured meets her smiling eye,
And with the fairest flow'rets graces
The darling of his reverie.
Oh, dulcet hope, most sweet emotion,
Oh, affluence of love and bliss!
The heart bounds on a golden ocean,
And revels in its happiness.
Ah! could it last in such perfection,
The happy time of young affection!

See, how brown the pipes are growing!
This assay I will plunge in,
If a glassy surface showing,
We the casting may begin.
Now, my helpmates, quick!
Ply the testing-stick,
Try if hard and soft combined
Mingling blend as we designed.

For where severity and grace,
Where force and gentleness embrace,
It blends harmoniously and strong.
Then prove, who seek a lasting bond,
If to the heart the heart respond!
Illusion's short, repentance long.
Sweetly in the bridal tresses
Doth the virgin garland twine,
While the merry peal addresses
Welcome to the festive shrine.
Ah! life's brightest festival
Also ends life's golden morn.
With the zone, and with the veil,
Sweet illusion's web is torn.

Though passions decay,
Yet love must survive;
The bloom fades away,
The fruit still must thrive;
And man must go forth
In the battle of life,
Must venture the strife,
And planting and striving,
And wrestling, contriving,
Must run in the race,
His fortune to chase.

Then blessings abundant flow in without measure,
The barns are replenished with heavenly treasure,
The stores are increasing, the building expands,
And within is busy
The modest matron,
The family mother,
E'er wisely presiding,
The household guiding.
There schooling the girls,
Here ruling the boys,
And endlessly fagging,
Her hands never flagging,
Increasing the gains,
With order and pains;
With treasures o'erspreading the fragrant deal,
And twisting the thread on the whirring wheel,
And on the shelves' brightly glistening boards,
The snowy linen she busily hoards,
And all things to use and to beauty disposes;
And never reposes.

And the father, with gladsome gaze,
From his homestead's far-seeing gable
His flourishing fortune surveys,
His far-spreading forest he measures,
And the granaries teeming with treasures,

And the storehouses bursting with grain,
And the cornfields' wide waving-plain,
Boasts there in proud admiration:
"Firm as the earth's foundation,
Against misfortune's might
My house stands fair and bright;"
But with the powers of destiny
There can no lasting compact be,
And misfortune comes apace.

Well, the casting may begin,
For the fracture shows most fair;
But, before we pour it in,
Offer up an humble prayer.
Out, thou plugging loam!
God protect our home!
Reeking, rolling, roaring, rushing,
Forth the fiery flood comes gushing.

Beneficent is Fire's might,
When man controls and curbs its spite;
And all he fashions, all he frames,
He owes unto the force of flames;
But fearful grows this heav'nly force,
When fetterless it wings its course,
Proceeding in its progress wild
As Nature's independent child.

Woe, when from its bonds arising,
Swelling on at boundless will,
Crowded streets their course devising,
Flames their dreadful flight fulfil!
For the elements despising
Hate the works of human skill.
From the clouds
Blessings tend,
Rains descend,
From the clouds, reckless, rash,
Darts the flash!
Hark! the steeple's note of harm!
The alarm!
Crimson bright
Glows the sky,
That is not the broad day-light!
Hue and cry
In the street!
Smoke-clouds fleet!
Flaring high the flames ascending,
Down the street's long passage bending,
Onward whirling, never-ending.
Boiling, as from furnace flowing,
Blow the breezes; beams are glowing,
Timber crashing, casements reeking,
Children wailing, mothers shrieking,

Beasts lie smother'd,
Ruin cover'd,
All is hurry, rescue, flight,
Bright as day the awful night.
Hand to hand in long procession,
Swift succession,
Hurls the bucket; high up-soaring
Fountains rise, their floods out-pouring.
Rushing comes the storm that roaring
With the fierce flames whirling wars,
Crackling in the parchèd stores
Falling, in the hoarded sheaves,
In the roof's well season'd eaves,
And, as if in its career
It would hurl the earth's whole spite
Onwards in tremendous flight,
Towers up to heaven's sphere
Giant-high!
Hopelessly
Man succumbs to Heaven's decrees;
Musing, he his labors sees,
And admiring, perish there.

Burnt and blasted
Lies the homestead,
Savage tempests' barren bed.

In the bleak and hollow casements
Terrors cower,
And the clouds of heaven lower,
Staring in.

One adieu
To the perish'd
Home he cherished,
Murmurs man—and then anew
His wand'ring staff is bravely flourished.
Howe'er by fire's rage bereft,
One sweetest comfort 's still in store,
He numbers all his fond ones o'er,
And, see! his darlings all are left.

Earth and ore have done their duty,
Well replenished is the clay;
Will it also rise in beauty,
Art and labour to repay?
Should our luck be curst!
Should the mould have burst!
Ah! perhaps, while hope-elated,
All our pains may be frustrated.

Unto the dark and hallow'd earth
We dedicate our work and deed,

The sower dedicates the seed,
And hopes it thriving may give birth
To blessings, as by Heav'n decreed.
More precious seed do we entomb,
Consigning it to earthly rest,
And hope that from its coffin'd gloom
'T will rise to spheres more bright and blest.

From the dome,
A funeral knell,
Gravely doling,
Booms the Bell.
Sadly do its mournful numbers
Greet a wand'rer to eternal slumbers.

Ah! the wife it is, the cherished;
Ah! it is the faithful mother
Whom the Prince of Shades is bearing,
From her husband's arm is tearing,
From her tender infant's care,
That to him she blooming bare;
That she on her faithful breast
Growing watched, and fondly bless'd;
Ah! the sweet domestic bands
Are dissolved for evermore,
For she dwells in shadow-lands
Who was mother here before;

Her fond care no more is guiding,
And her love has pass'd away;
O'er the orphan'd home presiding
Will th' unloving stranger sway.

Till the Bell shall be congealed,
Let stern labour rest awhile.
Free as bird by twigs concealed,
Each his leisure may beguile.
When the stars appear,
Of all duties clear,
Glad the boy when evening closes;
But the master ne'er reposes.

Gaily in the distance wending
Through the wild wood fares the wand'rer,
To his cherish'd cottage bending.
Bleating, home the sheep are flocking,
And the cattle's
Broad-faced herds come lowing,
Slowly winding,
Their accustom'd stables finding.
Rumbling in
Rolls the waggon,
Harvest laden;
Bright with colours,

On the corn-sheaves
Lies the garland,
And the merry troop of reapers
Join the dance.
Silent grow the streets and market;
Round the cheerful chimney circling
Th' inmates of the house assemble,
And the town-gate grating closes.
Darkness veileth
Earth around;
But the tranquil townsman haileth
Glad the night,
While with fright the sinner paleth,
For the eye of law is bright.

Sacred Order! bliss-surrounded
Child of Heaven, ever blending,
Like with like, to comfort tending;
That hast cities planned and founded,
Summoning, 'mid strife and ravage,
From the woods th' ungenial savage;
Entering human habitations,
Teaching harmony to nations,
And weaving that most sacred band,
That binds man to his native land.

Many thousand hands are striving,
Joining all with gladsome care,
And in arduous contriving,
Each his power brings to bear.
Master and apprentice toiling,
On the wings of Freedom borne,
Each rejoicing in his calling,
And defying scoff and scorn.
Industry adorns a nation,
Blessing is their toil's reward,
Honour to the sov'reign's station,
Honour to our labour hard.

Blessed Peace,
Delightful Concord,
Hover, hover,
Brightly smiling o'er this city!
May we never know the hour
When rough war's o'erwhelming forces
Hurtle through this peaceful valley,
When the heavens,
That the tender red of evening
Sweetly show,
With the villages' and cities'
Dreadful conflagrations glow.

Now break up the loamy building,
It has done its duty well;
That, to our exertions yielding,
We behold the perfect Bell.
Wield the hammer, wield,
Till the casing yield!
Ere the Bell in beauty rise
We the mould must sacrifice.

The master may destroy the mould
With judgment when occasion calls;
But, woe, when bursting from its hold,
The boiling metal rends its walls!
Blind raging, with loud thunder's crashing,
It bursts its broken bonds in twain,
And, as from open Hell out-flashing,
Destruction blazes in its train;
Where brutal force in madness reigns,
No structure e'er perfection gains;
When nations their own fetters rive,
Prosperity can never thrive.

Woe! when in cities' bosom glowing
The firebrand 's in secret nurs'd,
The people, their own yoke o'erthrowing,
For self-deliverance madly thirst!

Then sounds the Bell, that wildly yelling,
Shrieks out the hideous revolt,
And else in peaceful measures swelling,
Now gives the signal for assault.

Freedom, equality! are vaunted;
The peaceful citizen flies to arms.
The streets with ruffians are haunted,
And bands of murd'rers strike alarms.
Then women to hyenas changed
With horrors frantically jest;
Like beasts from all remorse estranged
The heart from out their foes they wrest.
Naught more is sacred; rent, disgraced
Are all the bonds of pious awe;
The good by miscreants are displaced,
And crimes and vices know no law.
'T is dangerous to rouse the lion,
The tiger's fangs destruction wage;
But Terror's most terrific scion
Is Man in his delirious rage.
Woe be to them who lend the light
Of Heaven's torch to sightless fools!
It cheers them not, can but ignite,
And ashes mark the realms it rules.

Concordia shall be its name!

Joy my God to me has given!
See! like to a star of gold,
From its casing, smooth and even,
We the metal core unfold.
Bright from crest to rim,
Gleaming clear and trim;
And th' escutcheon neat and shining,
Laud the maker's wise designing.

Stand round! stand round!
My helpmates all, the Bell surround,
To consecrate it and proclaim:
CONCORDIA shall be its name.
In concord, and in peaceful harmony,
It shall convoke the fond community.

And this henceforth its mission be,
Which man did at its birth decree!
High o'er this mean terrestrial dwelling,
Aloft in Heaven's azure tent,
At thunder's gates it shall be swelling,
A neighbour to the firmament;
Shall sound as a celestial message,
And like the stars in hallowed sphere,
That laud their Maker in their passage,
Shall usher in the circling year;

Things grave, eternal, only noting,
Its metal mouth shall soothing chime,
And hourly, on its swift wings floating
In rapid flight shall touch at time.
It shall to fortune lend expression;
Itself unfeeling, void of heart,
It shall attend with its vibration
Life's ever-changing motley mart.
But when its mighty music waneth,
That strikes the ear with thrilling sway,
Then it shall teach that nought remaineth,
That all on earth must pass away.

Now with force of ropes combined
From its tomb uplift the Bell,
That to realms of sound consigned,
High in Heaven it may dwell!
Heave it, hoist it, raise!
See! it moves, it sways!
Joy unto this town expressing,
PEACE shall be its peal's first blessing!

Nuptial Song.

GOETHE.

We sing a glad song of the gallant old knight
Who here in this castle was dwelling,
Where now at the wedding feast, merry and bright,
The cup to his grandson you 're filling.
Now the knight had been fighting in holy Crusade,
Where honours had crowned his victorious blade,
And when he alighted at home from his jade,
His castle unguarded appeared;
Of servants and property cleared.

Here you are, noble count, here you are, safe at home,
But of home you will be none the fonder!
The winds through the windows at liberty roam,
Through the halls and the chambers they wander.
But what's to be done in the bleak autumn night?
Full many I 've spent in a much sadder plight,
The morning has ever again put all right.
So quick by the moon's misty glitter,
To bed, in the straw, in the litter.

And in his delectable slumber he hears
Something hurrying skurrying past him,
The rat, he may rustle without any fears,
If I had but a breadcrumb to cast him!
But see! there is standing a wee little wight,
A pigmy so tiny, with lamp shining bright,
The air of a speaker, and gait all upright,
Full up at the weary count peeping,
Who though awake, fain would be sleeping.

"We 've taken the liberty," thus he began,
"To feast in the halls you 've forsaken;
And since we had fancied you far o'er the main,
We intended loud revels to waken.
And if you 'll permit us, and loathe not the sight,
The dwarfs hold a revel convivial and bright
To honour the bride on her nuptial night."
The count in the pleasure of slumber:
"Be ever your joys without number."

Three riders now enter from under the bed,
They ride forth in stately succession;
Then, singing and ringing, a queer cavalcade
Comes after, in motley procession.
And carriage on carriage with furniture bright,
'T would almost deprive one of hearing and sight,
As only the courts of great monarchs bedight;

At last in a bright gilded carriage
The bride and the guests of the marriage.

Now all of them scamper, and all of them run,
For seats, through the hall they are whirling;
For frisking and whisking and frolicsome fun
Each chooses, each conquers a darling.
They pipe and they fiddle, they twang, clang and clash,
They glide and they glitter, they dance, dart and dash,
They twitter and titter, they flirt and they flash;
The knight he looked on with a shiver,
He fancied himself in a fever.

Now a clatt'ring and prattling and rattling is heard,
Chairs, tables and benches are moved,
And each of them tries at the festival board,
To seat himself next his beloved;
They bring hams and sausages dainty to see,
And sirloins and fish and the poultry so wee;
The sparkling wine circles in gladness and glee;
They chatter and prattle so long,
Till at last they are hushed in a song.

And if we should sing all that after befell,
Then cease all the clang and the clatter,

For what he saw here on so pigmy a scale,
He witnessed, enjoyed on a greater.
Loud flourishes, ringing and singing so gay,
And carriages, horsemen and bridal display,
All come and appear and then curtsey away,
Innumerous gentlefolks pleasant;
Thus it was, and is also at present.

The Wizard's Apprentice.

GOETHE.

HA, at last the old magician
Has beta'en himself away!
And my magic erudition
Now his spirits shall obey.
All his spells and speeches
I did well construe,
And my magic teaches
Me to conjure too.

Wend thee! wend thee
On thy mission,
My volition
To fulfil;
To the water swiftly bend thee,
Full and fresh my bath to fill.

Come, thou broom, so old and rotten!
Wrap thy wretched rags around thee;
For a drudge thou wast begotten;
Now enact what I command thee!

Two light legs convey thee,
Topmost be a head;
Now nor stop nor stay thee
With thy pail!—Be sped!

Wend thee! wend thee
On thy mission,
My volition
To fulfil;
To the water swiftly bend thee,
Full and fresh my bath to fill.

See, he runs down to the river;
Verily is at the bank,
Back now rushes to deliver
Gushing floods into the tank.
Twice he goes already!
How each vessel fills!
How the waters eddy
With unnumber'd rills!
Leave it! leave it!
In full measure
Thou thy treasure
Hast conferred!—
Woe is me! I now perceive it!
I have quite forgot the word!

Ah, the word which can transfigure
Him to what he was before!
And he runs and brings with vigor!
Wert thou but the broom of yore!
Here again he rushes,
With his streaming scourge,
And a hundred gushes
Now around me surge!
No, no longer
I 'll endure it;
I 'll secure it!
This is spiteful!
And my fears grow strong and stronger!
See his look, how weird and frightful!

Oh, thou imp of Hell abhorrent,
Wilt thou drown us house and home?
O'er each threshold bursts a torrent,
Every crevice vomits foam.
Ah, confounded besom
That will not obey!
Broomstick, list to reason!
I entreat thee, stay!
Will, then, never
Pity touch thee?
I will clutch thee,
I will cleave thee,
And thy crazy wood shall shiver,
And my sharp axe shall achieve thee.

See, again he trudges hither!
As I throw myself upon thee
Straight, oh imp, thy spite shall wither;
Crashing falls the sharp edge on thee.
Truly! well directed!
See, he is in twain!
Now I am collected,
Freely breathe again!
Help! preserve me!
Both the parted
Sticks have started
Into life,
And stand ready dight to serve me!
Powers supernal! end this strife!

And they hurry! fast and faster
Sweeps the flood o'er hall and stairs.
What a horrible disaster!
Lord and patron! hear my prayers!—
Ah, here comes the master!
Lord, my grief is sore!
Those I thought to master
I can tame no more.
Back, depart ye,
Broom be banish'd!
Broom be vanish'd!
Cease disaster!
For as spirits none may start ye,
Save when needful, the Old Master.

The Minstrel's Curse.

The Minstrel's Curse.

UHLAND.

THERE stood in long-past ages a castle proud and bright,
Far over land and ocean it glitter'd from its height;
And all around of gardens a wreath of blossoms fair,
Where founts in rainbow beauty refreshed the fragrant air.

There sat a haughty tyrant, in wars and victories bred;
He sway'd his ruthless sceptre, so darkly and so dread;
For in his thoughts is horror, and in his eye is rage,
And in his words are scourges, and blood on ev'ry page.

One day unto this castle two noble minstrels fared,
The one in golden ringlets, the other silver-haired;

With harp in hand, the old man a prancing palfrey rode,
While merrily beside him his young companion strode.

"Now, boy," thus spake the elder, "refresh thy memory's train,
Strike to the richest accents, recall our deepest strain;
Collect thy every effort; of joy and sorrow sing!
We come this day to soften the stony-hearted king."

The minstrels stand already the column'd hall within,
And on the throne are sitting the monarch and his queen;
The king in awful splendour, like fiery northlight's glare,
The queen so mild and gentle, like moonbeams falling there.

Now struck his harp the minstrel, and from its every chord
A rich and ever richer deep swelling strain he poured;

Then forth like sounds from Heaven the boy's
clear accents rang,
While like a spectral chorus the hoary harper sang.

They sing of love and gladness, of blissful golden
days,
Of liberty and honour, of faith and holiness;
They sing of all that's lovely, man's bosom to
elate,
They sing of all that's lofty, man's heart to elevate.

The scornful throng of courtiers forget their wonted
sneer,
The king's most dauntless warriors now bow in
pious fear,
The queen, dissolv'd in sadness and pleasure pure
and sweet,
She throws from her fair bosom the rose to
the minstrel's feet.

"Ye have seduced my people, entice ye now my
queen?"
Thus screams the king in frenzy, he trembles in
his spleen,
He flings his sword, which flashing, pierces the young
boy's breast,
From whence, 'stead golden carols, the crimson life-
blood press'd.

And as by tempest scatter'd the crowd flies in alarm;
The youth lies pale and lifeless in his old master's arm,
He binds him on his palfrey, his cloak the funeral pall,
And silently and slowly he leaves with him the hall.

But 'fore the lofty portal, the aged minstrel stays,
He grasps his harp, his treasure, the harp of happier days;
Against a marble pillar he smites it in despair,
Then lifts his voice, and wildly his curses rend the air:

"Woe be to thee, proud mansion! may never more sweet song
Sound through thy column'd chambers melodiously along;
No, nought but groans and murmurs and slaves' desponding cries,
Till o'er thy mould'ring ruins th' avenging spirit rise!

"Woe be to you, fair gardens, bright in the May-morn air!
To you I show this corpse's distorted frigid stare,

That henceforth you may wither, that every fountain dry,
That you in future ages may parched and desolate lie!

"Woe be to thee, foul murd'rer! thou curse to minstrel's name!
In vain be all thy wrestling for wreaths of gory fame,
Thy name be disremember'd, in dark oblivion veil'd,
Be like the breath expiring, in vacancy exhaled!"

Loud cried the aged minstrel, and Heaven heard the cry,
The walls are rent asunder, the halls in ruins lie;
One pillar still bears witness of vanish'd pomp and might,
And that, already riven, may shatter over night.

Instead of fragrant gardens a barren desert land,
No tree sheds cooling shadows, no spring escapes the sand,
The king's name is unmention'd in song or glorious verse:
Sunk deep in dark oblivion! that is the Minstrel's Curse.

Harald.

UHLAND.

In front of his brave army, the valiant Harald rode,
The way through forests dreary the pale moon
dimly showed.

And many a conquered banner waved stately in
the gale,
And many songs of victory rang over hill and dale.

But hark! what is it rustling and whisp'ring in the
trees?
What rises from the waters and floats upon the
breeze?

What scatters flowers gaily? what ravishingly sings?
What skips among the warriors, and on the horses
springs?

What wooes so soft with kisses, and nestles close
and sweet?
And grasps the sword, and gently lifts the rider
from his seat?

It is the airy legion of Elves so light and gay;
They 've borne the warriors swiftly to Fairyland away.

But only he withstood them, Harald, the valiant knight.
Clad all around in armour, he dares all foes to fight.

Eloped are all his warriors, there lie their swords and shields;
The horses, lacking masters, range wild in woods and fields.

From thence in greatest sadness, rode Harald the proud knight,
He rode through dreary forests, alone by Luna's light.

Hark! from the rock there bubbles a limpid crystal rill,
The knight springs from his charger, he stoops, his thirst to still.

But see! his limbs are drooping, scarce has he cooled his lip,
When on the rock reclining, he nods and falls asleep.

And years full many a hundred, he slumbers on
that stone,
His head sunk on his bosom, his long beard
grizzly grown.

When lightnings flash, and roaring the thunders
vaunt their might,
Then grasps his falchion dreaming, Harald, the
hoary knight.

Guillaume

On Austria.

GRILLPARZER.

LOOK all around! where'er you gaze, behold
How all the land smiles like a bride serene:
The verdant meads, the harvest's waving gold,
With flax and saffron winking from the green,
With herbs and blossoms sweetening the breeze,
It spreads to vales of plenty and of ease.

A nosegay fair of numberless delights,
Girt round by Danube's sparkling silver thread,
It rises up to teeming vine-clad heights,
Where golden grapes their affluent bounty shed,
And in the smile of Heaven mellowing hang,
While forests echo with the huntsmen's clang.

And God's mild breath is wafted o'er the land,
That makes the Austrian frank and glad and gay;
It warms and cheers and makes his breast expand,
His faults, his joys, are open to the day;
By others envied, still he envies none,
And what he does, with cheerful mind is done.

May be in Saxony and on the Rhine,
Folks are more fond of reading letter'd lore,
But what is pleasing in the eye divine—
The honest sense, the bosom's guileless core—
With these the Austrian stands before the best,
Thinks his own thoughts, leaves talking to the rest.

Oh, blessed land, my native Austria!
There brightly 'twixt the infant Italy,
And the staunch full-grown man Germania,
Thou like a hale and ruddy lad dost lie!
May God preserve to thee thy youthful mind
And still redress where others proved unkind.

The Walk at Midnight.

HERWEGH.

I WANDER with the spirit of the night
Along the broad still streets, so dead in seeming;
How hasty were the tears, the laugh how light,
Here but an hour ago! Now all is dreaming.
Joy, like a flower has paled and died away,
The gayest goblet now no more o'erstreams,
And grief has vanished with the waning day;
The world is weary—leave it to its dreams!

How all my hate and anger fleet away,
When day's tempestuous struggles all are ended;
The moon sheds mild her reconciling ray,
E'en upon roseleaves withered and unfriended!
Soft as a tune, and soundless as a star,
My soul in mid-air o'er these confines skims;
As in itself it fain would search as far,
And deep in all men's inmost secret dreams!

My shadow like a spy glides after me,
I pause before a dungeon's dismal grating.
Oh, native land! thy son too true to thee,
His love is sorely, sadly expiating!

He sleeps, and feels he how he lies so low?
His noble oak in lofty grandeur gleams;
The laurel-wreath crowns his unconscious brow:
Oh, God of freedom, leave him to his dreams!

A palace proudly towers into sight,
I see, while peeping through the purple curtain,
How in his sleep one grasps his sword in fright,
With sinful looks, distracted and uncertain.
His countenance is yellow like the crown;
For flight he for a thousand horses screams;
He's dashed upon the earth, the earth breaks down:
Oh, God of vengeance, leave him to his dreams!

Yon mean and narrow cottage by the stream—
There innocence and hunger lie embracèd,
But to the peasant God has giv'n a dream
That waking cares be by the dream effacèd;
With every grain that falls from Morpheus' hands,
His teeming crops the golden distance seam,
His narrow cottage to a world expands:
Oh, God of poverty then let him dream!

And at the last house, on the bench of stone,
I'll pause, a blessing to invoke from Heaven;
I love thee true my child, but not alone,
To liberty my heart shall e'er be given.

In golden air doves rock thee evermore,
While from my prancing steeds the wild manes stream ;
Thou dream'st of butterflies, I with the eagle soar :
Oh, God of love, then let my darling dream !

Thou star, that break'st like fortune from on high !
Thou night, in thy deep azure calmly shrouded,
Let me not view too soon the evil eye
Of the awakening world with sorrows clouded !
On tears alight the first rays of the sun ;
Liberty flies before the morning beam ;
Proud tyranny doth whet his steel anon :
Oh, God of reveries, then let us dream !

My Child.

F. Vict. Strauss.

Come hither, my darling, thy father's glad joy;
Come, nestle up close to my bosom, my boy;
Deep, deep, in thy blue eyes I'll gaze with delight,
So pure and so holy, so cheerful and bright.

When home to my cottage thy mother I brought,
I felt that an angel my dwelling had sought;
And still we were lonely, our house was unblest,
Till into thy father's arms, thou, boy, wast placed.

And then with unspeakable power of love,
An infant descended, a gift from above,
And forth from thy tender eyes beamèd a light,
So innocent, blissful, so gentle and bright.

Oh, could I preserve thee so good and so fair,
For ever watch o'er thee with tenderest care,
And keep thee from turmoils, from hardship and harm,
So peaceful as here thou now liest in my arm—

But softly, inaudibly, swift in its course
Time flies o'er our heads with unmerciful force;
He ripes thee to boyhood, to youth, and to man,
Thou gazest on distance, thy life-course is ta'en.

Thou formest a hearth and a home of thy own,
And many another has dear to thee grown,
Thou'rt borne on the wings of thy hope, young and bold,
And leav'st far behind thee thy parents now old.

But let it remain so, since thus it must be,
For thou, my beloved one, art dear still to me;
Come hither, my darling, thy father's glad joy,
Come, nestle up close to my bosom, my boy.

Two Kinds of Birds.

LENAU.

HOMEBIRD Reflection,
  Rovingbird Poesy,
Each sings a diff'rent tune,
  Different melody.

Homebird e'er hops and sings,
  Pecking from sprig to sprig;
Seldom its flight it wings
  On to a neighbour's twig.

"Friend!" he cries, "stay at home,
  Honestly feed thyself;
'T is but a fool will roam
  Far off for fabled pelf.

"Oh, stay on native ground,
  Far from the foaming main,
Longing 's an empty sound,
  Here peck in peace thy grain."

Rovingbird makes reply:
"Thou, flutterer, canst not prize
All my flight's mystery;
Prudence here naught supplies.

"Steadily, steadily
Ever stay on thy bough,
For of my revery
Canst have no notion, thou.

"Deem it not quite insane,
Think it not madman's lore,
That o'er the distant main
There 's yet another shore."

A Friend.

BODENSTEDT.

If any one speak ill of thy dear friend,
And seem it ne'er so true, do not attend!
If all the world of that thy friend speak ill:
Mistrust the world and advocate him still!
He only that so truly loves his friend,
Deserves that Heaven him a friend should send.
A friend's heart is a treasure, rarely met,
For which the whole world cannot compensate;
A gem in which a secret magic lurks,
That with true faith alone its wonders works;
But with each breath of doubt its beauty wanes,
Once broken, it for ever dim remains.
Then if such gem be thy allotted joy,
Preserve its lustre pure, without alloy;
Oh, break it not! The whole world contemplate
But as a ring in which this gem is set,
Which from this gem its only worth has gained
For else the world without it were profaned.
And if thou shouldst the poorest beggar be
Thou 'rt rich if one friend's heart still beat for thee;
While poor is ev'n the monarch on his throne
Who stands without a friend, uncheer'd, alone.

'Tis one of Life's Unkindly Dispositions.

Jos. Vict. Scheffel.

'Tis one of life's unkindly dispositions,
That next to roses also thorns do grow,
And all the poor heart fancies and petitions
Must still at last endure the parting blow.
Thine eyes did once a tender meaning bear,
They beamed with love and fond felicity.
But fare thee well. It would have been too fair!—
Then fare thee well, it was not thus to be.

Grief, envy, hate—I too have felt their powers;
A weatherbeaten wanderer I rove;
I dreamt of peace and happy tranquil hours,
And fate directed me to thee, my love.
In thy fond arms I would forget all care,
And gratefully devote my life to thee.
But fare thee well. It would have been too fair!
Then fare thee well it was not thus to be.

The clouds do fleet, the wind howls o'er the heather,
The rain sweeps through the forest and the wold;
To say farewell, 't is just the proper weather;
Grey as the sky, I now the world behold!
Howe'er my fortune be, howe'er I fare,
My thoughts, thou gentle maid, shall be with thee.
Then fare thee well. It would have been too fair!—
Then fare thee well, it was not thus to be.

To the Sea.

ANASTASIUS GRÜN.

BOUNDLESS, vast and never ending,
  Bright and calm, portentously,
Thou before me liest expanded,
  Old, sublime, eternal sea!

Shall with tears I sadly greet thee,
  Such as sorrow often gave,
Weeping in a silent churchyard,
  Over some belovèd grave?

An enormous cemetery,
  A still vault thou liest there;
Many lives and many hopes, thou
  Buriest ruthless unaware.

Not a tombstone dost thou grant them,
  Not a cross, however poor;
Living monuments full many
  Wander weeping on thy shore.

Shall I greet thee with rejoicing,
Such as gladness oft displays,
At a garden fair and blooming
Spread beneath th' admiring gaze?

An immeasurable garden,
A rich treasury thou art;
Many peerless gems and relics
Lie within thy crystal heart.

Like the gardens' smiling meadows
Thou art also fair and green,
Pearls and coral groves and grottoes
In thy tranquil depths are seen.

Like still wand'rers in the garden,
O'er the main ships come and go,
Treasures claiming, treasures bringing,
Greeting, hoping, to and fro.

Shall my tears or shall rejoicing,
Boundless ocean, welcome thee?
Needless doubt and idle question,
Since to choose is not for me,

Seeing that the greatest pleasure
On mine eye a tear-drop leaves,
As the glow of morn and evening
Only dew to flowers gives.

Tearful were mine eyes uplifted
Godwards in the sacred dome,
And with tears I lately welcomed,
Greeted my dear native home.

Tearful I approach my true-love,
Whom within my arms I fold;
Tearful on those heights I knelt then,
Where I first did thee behold.

Oh, love as long as love you can.

FERDINAND FREILIGRATH.

OH, love as long as love you can!
Oh, love as long as love you may!
The hour will come, the hour will come,
When over graves you 'll weep and pray!

Oh, may your heart still warmly beat,
And cherish love, and nourish love,
As long as yet another heart
To yours its fond affection prove!

And whoso opes his heart to thee,
Oh, make each hour more sweet and glad!
Do all that can rejoice and please,
Do nothing that may make him sad!

And o'er thy tongue keep careful guard;
An angry word is soon expressed!
Alas, 't was not unkindly meant,
But he turns from you grief-oppressed.

Oh, love as long as love you can!
Oh, love as long as love you may!
The hour will come, the hour will come,
When over graves you 'll weep and pray!

Then you will kneel beside the tomb,
With aching heart and tearful eyes;
No more shall they that friend behold,
That now beneath the churchyard lies.

And you will cry: "Oh, friend, look down,
Behold me here in sorrow bent!
Forgive, forget my cruel taunt!
Alas, 't was not unkindly meant!"

But he nor sees nor hears you more;
He to your fond embrace comes not;
The lips on which so oft you hung,
They speak no more: 't is all forgot!

But he forgave you long ago,
Though many bitter tears were shed
For you and your ungrateful word!
But hush—he sleeps, his peace is made!

Oh, love as long as love you can!
Oh, love as long as love you may!
The hour will come, the hour will come,
When over graves you 'll weep and pray!

Leogair.

Fr. Halm.

The alders are swaying along by the stream,
Bright o'er the high rocks the moonbeams gleam;
And hark, in the distance! Why trembles the ground?
What clashing of arms? What shrill brazen sound?
What banners are streaming so gay in the night?
What helmets are gleaming? What meaneth this sight?
It is the royal Leogair,
Who leads his valiant army there;
He comes to conquer Leinster's land,
Takes therefore spear and sword to hand,
And therefore wave his banners proud,
And like a whirlwind rolls the crowd;
And when they at the stream arrive
The Nymphs up from the waters dive,
And hearken amazed to the clamorous throng,
And sing from the billows a plaintive song:
"Why flutters thy flag, why dost thou prepare
To march against Leinster, O Leogair?

When years long ago, on the oak-crownèd height,
Thy army was scatter'd and hurried to flight,
When Leinster's people, oh, shame and despair!
Did bind thee a captive, O Leogair!
Didst thou not promise, if ever a free
Return to thy kingdom were granted thee—
Didst thou not promise by word and hand
No more to invade Lord Leinster's land?
By sun and by wind thou didst pledge thy troth;
Mortal remember, remember thine oath!"
Loud laughing makes answer King Leogair:
"And if I did swear it, full little I care;
And if I did promise, by wind and by sun
Who is there as witness? I do not see one!
The sun has gone down by which I then swore,
And out of the sea has risen no more,
And as for the wind, by which I did swear,
Its rage has been wafted away in the air;
The sun and the wind departed are both,
And there where the proofs are, there is my oath!"
And laughing he spurs his steed swiftly on,
O'er briar and bramble, o'er stock and stone.
And wildly behind him, a frantic throng,
Dashes his army the valley along,
And the rocks re-echo their heavy tread,
And the morning dawns with a sullen red,

And Leinster's army in battle array
Blocks the defile and opposes their way.
And the air resounds with battle alarms
With shatt'ring of spears and clashing of arms;
And when the sun rises splendid and fair
The victory points unto Leogair,
And when the breeze begins to swell
Then Leinster's feeble forces fail.
Then spake the Sun: "I will not allow
That he should win who broke his vow,"—
In anger then the Zephyr blew:
"He's false to me, I'll prove so too."—
Then turned the Sun with fearful force
'Gainst Leogair's triumphant course,
And shoots his hot rays, dazzling bright,
Like arrows in the hostile sight,
And blinds the eyes of man and steed
That wild confusion stays their speed.
Then Wind revengeful rushing past
Blows with dilated cheeks a blast
That Leogair and all his host
In clouds of dust are whirled and lost;
The captain's cry and cheering word
Are all unheeded and unheard;
The banner's trailed along the ground,
And all are blind and deaf around.

Then Leinster's men once more unite,
Since Wind and Sun now for them fight,
And dashing forwards hew their way
Through foes now sickening with dismay.
But dauntless still stands Leògair,
When lo! an arrow cleaves the air—
He bleeds, he sinks, while over him
The battle's rage rolls dense and dim.
They fly, pursued by Leinster's train;
Deserted is the gory plain,
Hushed is the din of the battle and flight,
And silence sleeps in the shades of night;
And from the stream the wind conveys
The alders' sighs, the mermaids' lays,
And Zephyr whispers those words full of wrath:
"Mortal, remember, remember thine oath!"

The Ghost of Würzburgh.

E. Geibel.

At Würzburgh, at the "Golden Flower,"
They say, there stalks from midnight hour
Till one o'clock, a lonely ghost,
Whose presence oft has scared the host.
Three scholars once, with learned speeches,
Arrived in doublet, leathern breeches
And spurs that rang like silver-bells;
To them the host the story tells.
The scholars look profound and wise,
And say they'll ne'er believe such lies;
They'd travelled far, knew black from white,
And ne'er a ghost put them in fright;
The trial they would make to-day,
To mock and scare the ghost away.

So all three, full of merriment,
Into the haunted chamber went;
Three candles on the table stood,
The host brought white wine, fresh and good.

They talked of matters old and new,
Each drank a quart and praised it too,
But ere the hour of ten was o'er,
The white wine tasted good no more.
They told the host some red to bring,
Which soon began to make them sing,
And each in special merriment
Knew some mad glee or ballad quaint;
But when it struck th' eleventh hour,
The red wine too had grown too sour.
So loud they called for other wine,
Which you will easily divine,
That in the goblet froths and fritters,
With eddying pearls it brightly glitters.
Of this each drank much more than needful,
Of time and consequence unheedful,
Until at last, with gentle heaving,
They found their senses quickly leaving;
They felt the air grow damp and chill,
Their heads grew heavy, tongues grew still.

The clock now boomed the midnight hour;
In burst the door by unseen power;
And in there stepped—oh, hideous sight!—
The ghost, while they stood mute with fright.
His face, dress, hair, were ashy pale,
The hair behind was like a tail;

His nose alone quite redly shone,
And glowed like a carbuncle-stone.
The spectre to the table stalked
And thus with hollow voice he talked:
"How is it, knaves degenerate,
I find you here in such a state?
Can you not sleep this time of night,
Or study, with your senses bright,
Greek wisdom, as becomes your station,
Preparing for examination?
Instead of that you muddle here,
With wine your stony noddles sheer,
Disturb the calm repose of night,
How will you meet the morning's light?
How will your souls you satisfy?
With herrings and pale ale? Reply,
For what means have you to your knowledge,
To arm yourselves to go to college?"

With that he seized the first so coldly,
Beneath the table flung him boldly;
The second's throat then grasped so tight,
He thought his soul would say good night;
Then punched the belly of the third
That many groans and sighs were heard.

It was a struggle hot and reeking,
A dismal wriggling, wailing, shrieking,
Till with the first stroke of the bell
The spectre vanished with a smell.

The three were not in spirits now,
They felt cold sweat and glowing brow,
All quiet in the chamber kept,
That night upon hard benches slept,
And when the host appeared next day
With the long score they had to pay,
Then they confessed with looks depress'd
How that the ghost had been their guest,
Their limbs his heavy weight still bore,
His gripe would leave them nevermore.

This Würzburgh Ghost so dolorous,
His name is "Horrors" or "The Blues;"
The moral of this tale's sad plight—
"Never drink red wine after white;
And if champagne do crown your cheer,
The Ghost of Würzburgh will appear."

My Native Land so Mighty.

ROBERT HAMERLING.

My native land so mighty, where bloom in sunny shine
A hundred smiling cities from Elbe to verdant Rhine;
Where from the Alpine ranges up to the northern strand
Dwell many thousand brothers—God speed thee, mighty land!

My native land so lovely, where proud the rivers flow;
Where high the steeples tower, thy ancient castles glow;
Where in two mighty oceans thy shores reflect their sand,
The hills bloom mild and verdant—God speed thee, lovely land!

My native land so valiant, where, oak-entwined, still gleaming,
The shield of Hermann rusts not, where glistens, slumbering, dreaming,
The sword of Hohenstaufen, and where the German hand
Still wields them both so ably—God speed thee, valiant land!

Hamerling

My native land so noble, where every dark deceit
Th' enlightened flow of spirits doth boldly, proudly meet;
Where love and faith so pure as the offering's sacred brand
Within our bosoms gloweth—God speed thee, noble land!

My native land much-loved, that like a blessèd star
Shines brightly on our brothers beloved, however far;
To which so truly, firmly, one blessèd, sacred band
All German hearts uniteth—God speed thee, well-loved land!

My native land so sacred—bright in the morning's glow,
For ever for thy banner to meet our death we go,
When gloriously it flutters upon the North-sea-strand,
Or floats in Alpine breezes—God speed thee, sacred land!

The Bridge.

R. Hamerling.

High over rock and ridge
Love fondly fashions
Nightly a golden bridge,
Fairest, to thee!
Deep in the dead of night,
Tenderest passions
Further the structure bright,
Glorious to see!

Longing the groundwork lays,
She who imploring,
Even when nought she says,
Whispers to thee;
While as on arches wide
Hope boldly soaring,
Stretches from side to side,
Lofty and free.

Firmly love's ARDOUR lends
Binding connection,
While the quick HEART-BLOOD tends
All to cement;
But that the work attain
Brightest perfection,
DREAMS with their magic train,
Hasten the end.

Thus over rock and ridge
LOVE fondly fashions
Nightly a golden bridge,
Fairest, to thee!

The Pilgrimage to Kevlaar.

H. Heine.

I.

The mother stood at the window,
In bed her young son lay:
"Wilt not thou rise, my William,
To see the procession to-day?"—

"I am so sick, oh mother,
I can nor see nor hear;
I think of my poor dead darling,
And sad is my heart and sear."

"Arise, we will go to Kevlaar,
With book and beads and prayer;
The Virgin Mary soon will
Thy poor sick heart heal there."

Cathedral banners flutter,
Cathedral hymns are sung,
Cologne the Rhenish city,
Sends forth the pilgrim throng.

And slowly in the procession
The son and the mother plod,
They both sing in the chorus:
"Hail Mary, Mother of God!"

II.

The Virgin Mary at Kevlaar
Is deck'd in her best array;
Full many weary suff'rers
Throng to her shrine to-day.

The maim'd, and the halt, and the palsied
Devote her, as offerings meet,
All manner of waxen members,
Of waxen hands and feet.

And whoso offers a wax hand,
His hand is healed of its sore;
And he that offers a wax foot,
No pain in his foot feels more.

To Kevlaar went many on crutches
That now for their dancing are praised,
And many now play on the fiddle
Whose fingers were palsied and crazed.

So out of a waxen taper
The mother moulded a heart:
"Take that to the Virgin Mary,
And she will heal thy smart."

Then sighing the boy took the wax-heart,
And sighing he wander'd there;
But from his eyes gush tear-drops,
And from his heart the prayer:

"Thou blessed above all women,
Thou spotless Virgin Saint,
Thou queen sublime of Heaven,
Ah! list to my complaint!

"I dwelt with my mother so happy,
There at Cologne in the town,
The city of hundred chapels
And churches in wide renown.

"And near to us lived my darling,
But she is now no more—
O Virgin, I bring thee a wax-heart,
Heal thou my heart of its sore.

"Heal thou my heart in its yearning,
And I will never fail
To pray and to sing with fervor:
Praise to thee, Mary, hail!"

III.

The suffering son and his mother
Within the chamber slept;
While silent to the bedside
The Virgin mildly stept.

She bent down over the sufferer,
And touch'd him as he lay,
She touch'd his heart with her soft hand,
And smiled and passed away.

The mother saw all in a vision,
And more she beheld dismayed;
She woke from out her slumbers,
So loud the watchdogs bayed.

There pale, and calm, and breathless
In death her young son lay;
And on his wan cheeks quiver'd
The golden morning ray.

Her hands the mother folded,
Scarce roused from her revery;
Devoutly she sang and sweetly:
"Praise, Mary, be to thee!"

The Castle of Boncourt.

A. von Chamisso.

I dream myself back to my childhood,
And shake my age-furrowed brow;
O why do ye haunt me, ye pictures,
That seem'd long forgotten ere now?

High soars o'er the shadowy woodland
A castle in splendour and state;
I know well each tower and turret,
The drawbridge of stone and the gate.

Aloft from the gilded escutcheons
The lions look lovingly down,
I welcome their dear ancient faces;
And haste to the court-yard anon.

There lies the sphinx by the fountain;
The fig-tree still verdantly gleams,
Ah there, in that rocky seclusion,
I dreamt then my earliest dreams.

The Castle of Voncourt

I enter the time-honour'd chapel
And seek the ancestral tomb,
'T is there, from the pillar, still glitters
Th' escutcheon of old in the gloom.

My eyes are dim now and misty,
They read the inscription no more,
Though bright through the painted windows
The light gilds the characters o'er,

O pile of my fathers, thou standest
Thus firm in my mind even now,
And yet from the earth thou art vanish'd,
And over thee passes the plough.

Be fruitful, O soil of my childhood!
I bless thee, so fond and so fain;
And doubly I bless him, whoever
Now guideth the plough o'er thy plain.

But I will be up and be stirring,
My minstrel's harp in my hand,
Over distant shores I will wander,
Still singing from land to land.

I Loved Thee.

HERRMAN LINGG.

I LOVED thee, how could I conceal it?
My deepest soul before thee lay;
In all its depth I dared reveal it,
And yet from me thou turn'dst away.

Ah, how could ever hope beguile me,
To dream thy head upon this breast,
That, prone to tempests that defile me,
Ne'er knew a blissful hour of rest?

I loved thee—yes, I dare confess it!
I hoped—and ah, how keen the smart!
I have the courage to express it—
None know the tortures of my heart!

Farewell! and oh, may Heaven spare thee,
That e'en a touch of that hot breath
Which withered me should ever sear thee;
My heart alone endure till death!

The Forger.

J. G. Seidl.

Before the court of justice
There enters from the crowd,
A man, himself accusing,
By deep contrition bowed.
So wild his hair and manner,
So weird and wan is he,
That were he not a culprit
A maniac he might be.

To him the judges beckon,
Bid him his suit prefer:
"My lords," begins the stranger,
"Lend me a gracious ear!
To judge and then to punish
That is your duty's aim,
Then hear my guilt's confession,
And judge me and condemn!

The greatest crime, which is it?"
"'T is Murder!" answer they,
The stranger laughs: "Now tell me
The smaller next, I pray?"
The judges name "High Treason,"
The stranger laughs: "Proceed!"
Then Forgery is mentioned.
"There stop, lords! 't is my deed!

"Yes, Forgery! that is it,
Why, look, you learned men,
You as the third would rank it?
You would protect me fain?
I say 'tis worse than murder,
Than treason, vile and base!
A forger, yes I was one—
I do not plead for grace."

"A forger?" cry the judges,
"Where did you forge, and how,
And had you an accomplice?
Then name him and avow!"
But scornfully the stranger
Replies: "My Lords, take heed,
Look up from out your law books,
And in my visage read!

"Do you see there the traces
Of courtship, gay and bold?
The marks of vanished spring-tides,
Of passions long since cold?
These, with their smiling graces,
A spotless maid beguiled,
Who was of men's fierce passions
Unconscious as a child!

"Her love the maiden gave me,
Gave all she had to me,
And how, my lords, how think you,
Did I her love repay?
I coin'd false oaths of true love—
She no deception knew,
I coin'd false tears of passion—
She took them all for true.

"I coin'd true faith and virtue—
She took them for pure gold,
And feign'd and false and forged,
Was all I ever told.
She boasted of the treasures
That unto her I gave,
But when she felt deception,
She sank into the grave.

"A murder, lords, what is it?—
The steel is quick and hot!
And Treason?—it despatches
Its victim on the spot.
But Forg'ry is more dreadful,
It seeks by faith to blind,
It drowns the calls of conscience,
Derides the upright mind.

"Then speak, lords, speak the sentence!
I am prepared to hear,
My sins' o'erwhelming burden
I can no longer bear.
Each night I hear it thund'ring:
'Forger! discharge thy debt!
Restore, restore!'——I cannot!—
My guilt is far too great!"

The court in deep emotion,
With one accord reply:—
"That is not our office,
To God in heaven cry.
We do not judge the conscience,
The act alone we treat:
For heart-coins counterfeited
No human councils meet!"

Loud laughs in scorn the stranger,
  Then fast his hot tears flow:
"Oh! then, unworthy," cries he,
  "For e'en the hangman's blow!"
He goes, and what no judges
  In his distress e'er gave,
He, after long repentance,
  At last finds in the grave.

The Open Cupboard.

Nicolaus Lenau.

My dear old mother had long since departed,
She did not return, she was laid in the tomb;
And I was alone, and was broken-hearted,
And sadly I enter'd her small silent room.

Her cupboard was open—it was, I remember,
As she on departing had left it of yore,
As people leave things strewn about in the chamber
When the horses are waiting outside the door.

On the table a prayer-book lay still unfastened,
With many accounts undersigned by her hand;
And of her breakfast, when off she had hastened,
Some crumbs and a morsel of cake still remained.

I read the prayer that she had been reading:
It was for a mother, imploring the grace
Of God for her child, when her heart is bleeding;
I gasped for breath and cover'd my face.

I read her writing, ah! and unmeasured
Became my anguish deep and sore;
I read the figures, and then the treasured
Last remnants of joy in my heart I tore.

The fragments then of the meal I collected,
The smallest crumbs together I swept,
And though to be choked I each moment expected,
I ate of the cake and bitterly wept.

The Bridge.

ANASTASIUS GRÜN.

I DO know a bridge, my darling,
Where to linger is so sweet;
Perfumes there of springs eternal
Like balsamic breezes meet.

From the heart, and to the heart, there
Leads the bridge's wondrous way,
Open but to Love's affection,
Subject only to his sway.

Love has built the bridge, and formed it
Out of roses sweet and rare!
Soul to soul there freely wanders,
Like the lover to his fair.

Love has spann'd it fondly, boldly,
Love adorned and deck'd it all;
Love there standeth as the tollman,
Kisses are the bridge's toll.

Sweetest maiden, would'st thou gladly
  This my wondrous structure see?
Be it so, but thou must truly
  Help to fashion it with me.

Banish from thy brow the cloudlet!
  Faithfully gaze in mine eyes!
Lay thy lip on mine, my darling,
  And the magic bridge will rise.

Bertran de Born.

L. Uhland.

High upon the rocky summit
Smokes the ruined Autafort,
And the castle's lord stands fettered
In the king's pavilion court:
"Art thou he that spread rebellion
Everywhere with song and sword;
That did instigate the children
To oppose their father's word?

Stands before me he that boasted
In presumptuous vanity:
That he never needed more than
Half his spirit's potency?
Now that half will not suffice thee,
Summon all thy mental strain,
To rebuild once more thy castle,
And to rend thy bonds in twain!"

"Even so, Bertran de Born, here
Thou behold'st, my king and lord,
That inspired with his verses
Ventador and Perigord,
That has ever been a blemish
To his mighty sov'reign's eye,
For whose sake e'en royal children
Dared their father's rage defy."

"In her bower sat thy daughter,
Sweetly deck'd, a duke's fair bride,
And before her sang the minstrel
In whose song my spirit sigh'd;
Sang how once her pride had revel'd
In the poet's longing strain,
Till her bridal gems bedew'd were
With the tears that flowed amain.

"From the olive shades of slumber
Up arose thy stalwart son,
When with angry songs of battle
I assail'd his ear anon.
Swiftly was his charger saddled,
And I bore the banner forth,
'Gainst the death-dart that so roughly
Laid him low on Montfort's earth.

"Bleeding in my arms he panted,
And 't was not the weapon's smart,
But the thought that he was dying
With thy curse, that wrung his heart.
Fain would he outstretch his right hand
O'er the mountains, o'er the main,
And as thine he could not reach more,
Silently press'd mine again.

"Then like Autafort up yonder,
Blasted was my power and craft;
Not the whole, not e'en a moiety
More remain'd of song or shaft.
Light for thee my arm to fetter,
Since enchain'd my spirit lies;
One more dirge it sadly murmur'd,
Then it sank, no more to rise."

Then his brow the monarch sinking
Said: "Thou hast beguiled my son,
Hast my daughter's heart enchanted,
And my own hast touch'd and won.
Take the hand, that all-forgiving
Should have press'd thy friend's in death!
Off the fetters! Of thy spirit
I have felt a genial breath."

Song.

HERRMAN LINGG.

I FAIN would dwell upon an isle
  Far o'er the silent, boundless main;
An isle that basks in sunny smile,
  Remote from Europe's cark and pain.

I fain would plant the earliest trees,
  The vines, the grainfields, glad and free;
And with the earliest colonies
  Would found a land of liberty.

The laurel sprigs no more, no more,
  Of Grecian and Italian skies,
That droop but o'er the dust of yore,
  And twine their wreaths with funeral sighs!

The ashy stage no more, no more,
  Of blasted realms, of battles' woe;
We've had too much of history's lore,
  Too much, too much of long ago!

But there upon those strands so blest,
  Time smiles into the azure light,
E'en like an infant at the breast
  Of Nature undefamed and bright.

The Gipsy Boy in the North.

EMANUEL GEIBEL.

SOUTHWARD far the fair España
Is my home, my native-land,
Where the shadowy castaña
Rushes o'er the Ebro-strand:
Where the almonds bloom so blandly,
Where the grape more ardent gleams,
And the roses blush more fondly,
And the moon sheds brighter beams.

With my lute I wander sadly
Here from house to house alone,
But no friendly eye looks gladly,
Kindly on the poor unknown.
Scant the pittance that they throw me,
And they turn me from their door;
None will hear me, none will know me,
Me, the gipsy brown and poor.

Southward home I fain would wander
To the land of light and love.

Ah, these fogs depress and chill me,
For they hide from me the sun;
Of the songs that used to thrill me,
I remember scarcely one.
Ever firmer, ever fonder
In my strains the cry is wove:
Southward home I fain would wander
To the land of light and love!

Lately at the feast of pleasure,
While the harvest dance went round,
There I played my gayest measure,
Strung my lute to sweetest sound.
But amid the mirth and gladness,
As the sun set bright and gold,
Down my brown cheeks tears of sadness
Rapidly and hotly roll'd.

And I thought, amid the dances,
Of my native land so blest,
Where the moon more sweetly glances,
Where more freely beats each breast.
Where unto the cithern's measure
Every step transported springs,
And the lad with his fair treasure
Glowing the fandango wings.

No! my bosom's ardent yearning
I no longer can repress;
Every other pleasure spurning,
Home is all my happiness!
Southward home! to fair España!
To the land of love and light!
'Neath the shade of the castaña
Must my quiet grave be dight.

The Parrot of the Aturians.

ERNST CURTIUS.

THIS Poem is founded on a fact related by Alexander von Humboldt in his "Aspects of Nature." In the Orinoco Mountains there are traces of a race of people—the Aturians—who, according to popular tradition, had been driven thither by cannibal tribes from the Caribbee Islands, and sought refuge on the cliffs of the cataracts, where they and their language perished about a century ago. One old parrot alone is still living, who, not being understood by the natives, is said still to talk the language of the Aturians.

IN the wilds of Orinoco,
Sits a parrot old and lone,
Cold and grim, as if his image,
Had been chiselled out of stone.

Foaming from the rocky caverns,
Bursts the torrent's roaring flight,
Over it the graceful palm-trees
Sun themselves in happy light.

Though to Heaven tend the billows,
Never do they gain their end;
With the watery spray commingling
Does the sun his beauty blend.

Down below, where waves are rolling,
Lies a nation sunk and dead;
Driven forth from home and country,
To these rugged cliffs it fled.

And there perished the Aturians,
As they lived, so free and brave;
And their last remains lie buried,
In the river's sedgy grave.

Very last of the Aturians,
Sadly mourns the parrot there;
Whets his beak upon the branches,
And his cry sounds through the air.

Ah! the boys that laughing taught him,
To repeat their mother tongue,
And the maidens fair that fed him,
Fondled him the rocks among:

All he slaughtered and forgotten,
Stretched along the reedy shore,
And his dismal sad complaining
None to life has wakened more.

Thus, alone, uncomprehended,
To a strange world he makes moan;
Hears the roar but of the waters,
Not a soul more heeds his groan;

And the savage that beholds him,
Rows more swiftly by in awe;
None, without a secret shudder,
The Aturian Parrot saw.

Lenore.

G. A. Bürger.

Lenore rose up at morning red
From heavy dreams of anguish:
"Art faithless, William, or art dead?
How long wilt let me languish?"
He with King Frederick's warlike might
At Prague had march'd into the fight,
And had no tidings given
Of how his luck had thriven.

The empress and her royal foe
In fury now relented,
And, tired of warfare and of woe,
To peace at length consented.
And both the hosts with song and cheer,
With clash and clang in glad career,
Adorned with sprigs and flowers,
Returned to homes and bowers.

And everywhere, o'er hill and dale,
By road and stile and turning,
Did young and old exulting hail
The shouts of the returning.
"Thank Heaven!" wives and children cried,
And "Welcome!" many a happy bride;
Alas! for poor Lenore
Nor kiss nor bliss was more.

She ran along with fear distraught,
Ask'd each in swift succession;
Alas, not one could tell her aught
In all that long procession.
And when at last the train had pass'd
Upon the ground herself she cast,
Her raven tresses tearing,
Desponding and despairing.

Her mother cried in fond dismay:
"Lord! Mercy on my daughter!
My child, how is it with thee? Say!"
And in her arms she caught her.
"Oh, mother, what is gone is gone!
Farewell to world and all anon!
God has no pity for me,
Woe, woe alone hangs o'er me!"

"Help, Heaven, help! look mildly down!
Child, pray a pater-noster!
What God does is benignly done,
Thee God will kindly foster!"
"Oh, mother, all is vanity!
God has not acted well by me!
What need vain prayers to falter?
My grief they cannot alter."

"Help, Heaven, help! Who trusts the Lord
From Him will comfort borrow;
Soon will God's sacrament afford
Thee solace in thy sorrow."
"Oh, mother, mother, my heart's sore
Nor saint nor sacrament heals more!
No unction will recover
From death to life my lover."

"Hark, child! What if the faithless man
In foreign lands should tarry,
And, false to thee, had vowed again
Another fair to marry?
Forget, my child, his perjured love!
It will his own damnation prove!
When life and soul forsake him,
God's vengeance will o'ertake him."

"Oh, mother, what is gone is gone!
What's lost is lost for ever!
Death, death alone is mine anon!
Oh, hadst thou born me never!
Out, out my light to darksome night!
Die out, die out in dread and fright!
God has no pity for me,
Woe, only woe hangs o'er me."

"Help, Heaven, help! No judgment pass
Against my poor frail daughter!
She knows not what she speaks, alas,
Her sorrow has distraught her!
Oh, child, forget thy heart's distress,
And turn to God and blessedness!
Then for thy soul the lover
Thou surely wilt recover."

"Oh, mother, what is blessedness?
And what is hell, oh, mother?
With William only there is bliss,
And hell without him, mother!
Out, out my light to darksome night!
Die out, die out in dread and fright!
Nor earth nor Heaven can cheer me
Where William is not near me."

Thus raged despair and grief intense
Within this hapless maiden;
She raved against God's providence
With frenzy sorely laden;
She wrung her hands and beat her breast,
Until the sun sank down to rest,
Until in azure regions
Forth beamed the starry legions.

And clatter, clatter, hark so late,
The hoofs of courser sounded;
Then clanking at the postern gate
A horseman lightly bounded;
And hark! and hark! a gentle rap!
Quite slightly, lightly, tap, tap, tap!
Then through the door came faintly
In accents uttered gently:

"My darling! love, come ope the door!
Art waking, love, or sleeping?
Art faithful ever as of yore?
Art laughing, love, or weeping?"
"Ah, William, thou! so late by night?
I 've waked and wept since morning light;
Ah, who can tell my yearning!
Say, whence art thou returning?"

"We saddle but at dead of night;
Late from Bohemia hieing
I hither spurred, and ere the light
With thee I must be flying."
"Oh, William, first quick come in-doors!
The wind through hawthorn-bushes roars,
Come in, my love, and near thee
These arms shall warm and cheer thee!"

"Let winds through hawthorns rush and roar,
Child, let them howl and hurry!
Wild snorts my steed, clear rings the spur,
I dare no longer tarry.
Busk, spring and swing thee up with speed
Behind me on my swarthy steed!
A hundred miles we measure
To-night to bridal pleasure."

"Alack! a hundred miles wilt scour
To-night thy pleasure claiming?
And hark! the bell still booms the hour,
Eleven just proclaiming."
"See here, see there! The moon shines bright,
We and the dead ride fast by night.
Ere morn I will convey thee;
To bridal bed I'll lay thee."

"But say, where is thy bridal hall?
Where, how the bridal bed, dear?"
"Far, far from here! still, cool and small!
Within six boards 'tis laid, dear!"
"Has't room for me?"—"For thee and me!
Come busk and spring, and up with thee!
The wedding guests will meet us,
And at the bower greet us."

The fair one busk'd, and sprang and swung,
Upon the steed she bounded;
To the beloved one fondly clung,
His form her arms surrounded.
And hurry, hurry, clatter, clack!
Away they galloped, crack, crack, crack!
Forward they dashed and darted,
While sparks from pebbles started.

To right away, to left away,
The objects past them flashing,
They scoured o'er mountain, moor and lea,
O'er bridges madly dashing.
"Does darling fear? The moon shines bright!
We and the dead ride fast by night!
Art fearful, love, of spectres?"
"Ah, no! but leave the spectres!"

What yonder sung, what yonder rung?
Lo! how the ravens fluttered!
Hark, death bell clang! hark, funeral song!
"We hide the dead!" was muttered.
And nearer came a dismal throng,
That bier and coffin bore along;
The dirge was like the droning
Of toads in marshes moaning.

"At dead of night the body hide,
With clang and song and sorrow!
I homeward ride with my young bride,
Come, come, we feast ere morrow!
Come, sexton, here! come with thy train,
And mumble out the bridal strain!
Come, priest, pronounce the blessing,
As homeward we are pressing!"

Ceased clang and song. Sank bier and pall,
Obedient to his bidding,
Came hurry, hurry! train and all,
Behind his courser speeding.
And forward, forward, clatter, clack!
With wild halloo, and crack, crack, crack!
Headlong they dashed and darted,
While sparks from pebbles started.

How flew to right, how flew to left,
Trees, hills and rocky ridges!
How flew to left, and right, and left,
Towns, villages and bridges!—
"Does darling fear? The moon shines bright!
Hurrah! the dead ride fast by night!
Art fearful, love, of spectres?"—
"Ah! let them rest, those spectres."—

What yonder hung, what yonder swung?
Around the gibbet prancing,
Half seen the fitful rays among
An airy rabble dancing.—
"Holla! ye rabble, here, come here!
Come, follow me, ye rabble queer!
The bridal dance be skipping,
When we to bed are tripping!"

And helter and skelter, swift behind,
The rabble huddling rattled,
As in the hazel-bush the wind
Through dry leaves whirling battled.
And ever onward, clatter, clack,
They spurred and galloped, crack, crack, crack!
Wildly they dashed and darted,
While sparks from pebbles started.

How fled the earth in moonlight dim,
Beneath their feet receding!
How high above and over them
The sky and stars were speeding!
"Does darling fear? The moon shines bright!
Hurrah! the dead ride fast by night!
Art fearful, love, of spectres?"
"Alack! rouse not those spectres!"

"Steed, steed! The bird of morn I hear,
The sand will soon be wasted—
Steed, steed! I scent the morning air—
Steed! be thy course now hasted!
'T is done, 't is done! our race is run!
The bridal bed receives its own!
Swift do the spectres scour!
We 've reached the bridal bower."

They dashed up to an iron gate,
With slacken'd reins they clattered;
With slender staff a blow thereat,
And bar and bolt were shattered.
The yielding gates check not their speed,
And over graves flew man and steed;
Tombstones were faintly gleaming,
As in the moonlight dreaming.

Ha see, ha see! swift as a thought,
Hoo-hoo! a hideous wonder!
The rider's jerkin round about
Like cinders fell asunder.
His head was reft of crest and cue,
A scalpless skull of ghastly hue;
The bones, of flesh divested,
On scythe and hour-glass rested.

High reared and snorted wild the horse,
With flashing eyes distorted;
And in a trice, its swarthy corse,
Was vanish'd and transported.
Shrieks, shrieks and wailings fill the gloom,
And yells and groans from cavern'd tomb;
Lenore's poor heart contending,
'Twixt death and life was pending.

And now within the flick'ring glance,
In ghastly circle prowling.
The spectres held a fetter-dance,
This frightful burden howling:
"Endure! endure! though heart be sore,
'Gainst God in Heaven wage no war!
Thy corse to earth be given,
God take thy soul to Heaven!"

Shrieks, shrieks and wailings fill the gloom
And yells and groans from cavern'd tomb.

The Old Buffoon.

ANASTASIUS GRÜN.

THE rustling curtain upwards glides—
An old buffoon the stage bestrides—
Bedecked with spangles queer and quaint,
His honest face bedaubed with paint.

Thou poor old man with silver hair,
My heart laments thy cark and care;
Thus o'er thy grave thou caperest
From vulgar lips a smile to wrest;

A smile that pitilessly mocks
Thy feeble age, thy silvery locks.
Oh, that a life such price should claim,—
Thine, poor old man, no higher aim!

The old man's brain is slack and slow,
His tenderest feelings coldly glow,
But thou with sorrow and with pain
Still seek'st to force a flourish vain.

The old man's arm is cramp'd and crazed,
His weary hand is only raised
His little ones withal to bless,
Or clasp'd in prayer or humbleness.

But thy hand still beats frantic time
To wanton talk or wilder rhyme,
And all thy toil and care the while
Is—that the rabble may but smile.

And if thy limbs are sick and sore,
What matters it, they 're thine no more!
And if thou weep'st, alas, who cares?
The laughing crowd no sadness shares.

And in a chair the aged clown,
His aching limbs to rest, sits down:
"He takes his ease, the lazy lout!"
Is muttered 'mong the scoffing rout.

In accents faltering and weak,
He slowly now begins to speak.
"Mark! he forgets his cues to keep,"
The rabble cries with curses deep.

He babbles many a soundless word,
His faltering voice is scarcely heard,
And now—his speech is not yet o'er—
He stops, as he could speak no more.

The curtain drops with the tinkling bell,
Who 'd think it was his dying knell?
And drumming and hissing shouts the throng,
Who 'd think it was his funeral song?

The old man in his chair lies dead,
But life 's dissembled in the red
That on his cheeks, so ghastly, cold,
Stares brazen as a falsehood bold.

It rests upon the old man's face,
E'en like an epitaph which says:
"All was a vain and cruel strife,
His art, his striving, and his life."

His canvas forest doth not wave,
In plaintive murmurs o'er his grave,
His paper moon is loth to shed,
Its lurid light to wail the dead.

His fellow-artists on him gaze,
And thus exclaim unto his praise:
"Hail to the veteran-hero brave,
Who in the action found his grave!"

A juggling girl advances now,
And Muse-like crowns his aged brow,
With paper laurels old and worn,
With too much use besmeared and torn.

Two men compose his funeral train,
To bear his coffin more were vain,
And as he to his grave now hies,
See, no one laughs and no one cries!

THE STRIKE OF THE SMITHS.

FROM THE FRENCH

OF

FRANÇOIS COPPÉE.

The Strike of the Smiths.

FRANÇOIS COPPÉE.

BRIEF, my lords of justice, my history shall be:
The smiths agreed to strike in their emergency;
The winter was so cold, provisions dear, at last
The suburbs grew distress'd: 'tis painful oft to fast.
On Saturday, the evening when we receive our pay,
They take me gently by my arm and lead the way
Unto the tavern where my oldest comrades wait—
I have before refused their several names to state—
And thus they say: "Our patience, father John, is o'er,
Let them increase our pay, or else we work no more.
We are their slaves, what else can end our woes?
And therefore you, as our senior, we chose
To go and gently tell our master our desire,
That, if he still refuse to increase our scanty hire,
Then like so many Mondays shall henceforth be each day;
Speak, father John, will you then be our man?"
I say
I will, since it is useful in my comrades' aid.
Lord President, I never did a street blockade;

I 'm old and peaceable, and I somehow dislike
Those black coats who incite the working men to strike.
But could I well refuse to grant them their petition?
So I engage to do it, and enter on my mission.
The master 's just at dinner; he bids me be shown in,
I point out our distress, how hard the times have been;
The scarcity of dwellings, the price of bread; declare
We can no longer bear it; proceed then to compare
His profits with our own, at last politely say,
That he could well without great loss increase our pay.
He, cracking nuts, had calmly listened; then began
And said:
"You, father John, you are an honest man,
And I am sure that they who sent you here well knew
How wisely they were acting in selecting you;
And you will at my forge e'er find a ready fire;
But know, 't would ruin me to pay what they desire:
I close my shop to-morrow, for I know most truly,
'T is those that will not work, that are the most unruly;

I have no more to say and you may tell them so."
Well, sir, that's all I say, then silently I go,
With sadly heavy heart, to bear unto my friends
The answer, as I promised, that the master sends.
The riot now is raised: they canvass state affairs;
They swear no more to tread that hateful shop of theirs,
And—curse it!—I swear too, just as the others do!
Alas, not one that evening, when at home he threw
Upon his squalid table the remnants of his pay,
Could feel, I answer for it, his soul so free and gay,
Or soundly sleep that night and not once even think,
That he for weeks perhaps might hear no money clink—
That he must now get used to hunger and to cold.
For me, the blow was hard, for I am getting old,
And I am not alone. And when at home, oppress'd,
I clasped my two grandchildren fondly to my breast—
My son-in-law had failed, they never knew their mother—
And pensively I gazed on one and on the other
Of those sweet hung'ring mouths, my lords, then I did weep
To think how I had sworn such holiday to keep.

But I was not worse off than all the others were,
And, as we can well keep the oaths that we do swear,
I felt as I should never in my duty fail.
My poor old wife return'd now from washing, with her pail
And bundle of damp linen, bending beneath their weight,
And timidly I told her the whole truth of the state.
Poor thing! she had no heart to utter a rebuke;
She stood, and to the ground she cast her troubled look,
Stood long immovable, and then this answer gave:
"My husband, well you know how I have tried to save;
I'll still do what I can, but sure the times are sore,
And we have barely bread to last a fortnight more."
I said: "Perhaps we may still find a remedy;"
Though well I was aware, unless by treachery,
I could do nothing more. The rioters were bent
On carrying resistance to the last extent,
And would severely punish the traitors to their words.
Now misery set in. Oh, my lords! my lords!
Believe me, even in our greatest need and grief,
I never for one moment thought of turning thief;

Even at the very thought I should have died of shame;
Nor do I think much credit is due to even them,
Who, wretchedly desponding, have before their sight
Naught but despair and famine from morning unto night,
And never once a sinful and wicked thought did feel.
Still, when the season come of bitterest frost and chill—
As if defiant of my oft-proved honesty—
My fearless wife and two grandchildren I did see
All shivering by the hearth, that flameless mass of stones,
Before those infants' cries, before that woman's groans,
Before that piteous group, benumbed and petrified,
Not once—I boldly swear it, by Jesus crucified—
Not even once appeared before my gloomy sight
That deed so base and furtive of darkness and the night
In which the eye espies, the hand doth trembling seize.
Alas, if now my heart subdued and vanquished is,

If I before you stand depress'd and weeping here,
It is because I see those piteous forms appear
Of whom I spoke, for whom I did e'en what I did.
And now we all behaved as proper in our need;
We lived upon dry bread and pawned our little all;
I suffered much. Our chamber was a cage so small,
We could no longer stay within that dismal room;
And see, I since have tasted the prison's dreary gloom,
And found the difference not even so very great,
For to do nothing is a greater evil yet.
One scarcely would believe it, but if one is decreed
To stay at home by force, ah, then 't is felt indeed
How much one loves the shop, and that the atmosphere
Of iron-dust and smoke is that which is most dear.

At the end of fourteen days, we not a farthing had:
I had passed all this time in going about like mad,
Alone, straight on and aimlessly among the throng:
The din of cities bears one dreamingly along,
And better e'en than spirits deadens hunger's throes.
But once, on reaching home, it was towards the close

Of a bleak afternoon, in cold and grey December,
My wife was sitting in a corner of the chamber,
The children, faintly moaning, in her arms did lie,
And then it flashed across me: THEIR MURDERER AM I!
My wife then said to me, faintly, almost confused:
"My poor dear husband, think, the pawnhouse has refused
Our last and only mattress, it was too bad they said;
Where will you now contrive to find the needful bread?"

Then boldly taking courage, I answer'd: "I will go,
I will resume my work and thereby end our woe."
And though I was prepared to meet resistance there,
Still to the well-known tavern I instant did repair,
For there, I knew, the leaders of this sad strike did scheme.
I entered, and, my faith! I thought it was a dream,
They drank, while we at home were grappling with starvation!
They drank! Oh, they that paid those caitiffs their collation,
And to prolong the torture of this our state did tend,
Oh, may upon them still an old man's curse descend!

And when towards the drinkers I advanced now
And they perceived my red, hot eyes, my troubled brow,
They understood right well what chance had led me here;
But caring little for their scowls and eyes severe,
I thus addressed them:
"To tell you this I came:
I am past sixty years of age, my wife the same,
I have two infant children entrusted to my care;
And in an humble garret together we do fare;
All that we had is sold and we have no more bread.
A pallet in the poor house, the lancet when I'm dead,
That, I suppose, must be the doom of one like me;
But for my wife and infants it must not, cannot be.
I therefore, now resume my work alone again,
But first of all I fain would your permission gain,
Lest that in calumny they speak behind my back;
For see, my hair is white, my hands are hard and black,
For forty years I now my honest bread do earn,
Then let me to my work, let me alone return;
I tried to beg my bread, but found I was not able,
For I am now too old; oh, it is pitiable,

To see one, on whose brow the deepening lines are ploughed,
By long continued labour, already bent and bowed,
Extending to the passers a hand still firm, robust.
Oh, let me, I implore you, if 't is not too unjust,
That as the oldest of you, I am the first to cede;
Let me return alone, to the workshop in my need.
I 've done. Speak, have I vexed you, that you look so grave?"
Then one, advancing towards me, cried: "Cowardly slave!"

I felt my heart grow cold, my blood flew to my head,
I looked into his face who had this insult said:
It was a big young fellow, bloated with the air
Of tavern balls, a wretch, unwashed, who wore his hair
In curls, like any girl, upon his craven brow.
He sneered and fixed his eyes with scorn upon me now,
While all the rest in silence stood eagerly around;
The beating of my heart was there the only sound.

Then seizing in both hands my fev'rish head, I cry:
"In God's name then, my wife and little ones shall die;

'T is good and I shall work no more! But this I swear,
That thou shalt justify this insult that I bear,
And that we two shall fight, just as the townsmen use!
The hour? Here, at once. My weapon? I shall choose,
And zounds! the ponderous sledge-hammer shall be ta'en,
That 's lighter for our arms than rapier or pen;
And you, our fellow-workmen, you shall the seconds be.
Then form a circle round us, search and bring to me,
Two of those trusty iron knockers lying there,
And thou, thou vile insulter of old age, lay bare
Thy dastard chest and arms, and spit into thy hand!"
Then forcing for myself a way amid the band
Of workmen, I espied two stout sledge-hammers thrust
Among a heap of iron, old and brown with rust,
And with a practised eye examined them, then flung
The best to him, who had done me this mortal wrong.
With sneers he stood and caught the weapon I had thrown;
His posture, erewhile careless, had defensive grown,

And then he cried: "Old man, dost think I am afraid?"
I here advancèd towards him, no other answer made,
But fixed my eye upon him, so deep, so keen, so dread—
And whirled aloft my hammer high above my head,
That tool of honest trade—of deadly combat now!
The dog that crouches trembling beneath the falling blow
Has in his frightened eye that mutely pleads for grace
No look of supplication half so vile or base
As that which I beheld that moment in the eye
Of that pale villain, who recoiled and tremblingly
Seeking support against the room-wall, sickening fell.
But alas, it was too late! A crimson veil,
A bloody mist arose betwixt my sight
And that foul being, felled to the earth by fright;
And with one blow, one single blow, his skull I crushed!
I know it is a murder—the blood to Heaven gushed;
And I stand here condemned, nor do I wish at last
That cool assassination for duelling be passed.

Dead at my feet he lay, a mutilated corse,
While I stood there like one in whom th' intense remorse
Which Cain so keenly felt, now seemed at once to rise.
Ay, I stood there and buried within my hand my eyes.
My fellow-workmen now approaching, tried to lay
Their trembling hands upon me and lead me thence away,
But with a wafture of my hand preventing them,
I said:
"Leave me alone, I will myself condemn."

They understood,—and then uncovering my head
And holding out my cap, with faltering voice I said:
"'Tis for my wife and for my little ones, my men."
It was ten francs, a comrade gave it them, and then
I went and yielded up myself to the police.
You now have heard the story, such as it really is,
Of this my crime, and truly—you need not much attend
To what the counsel, pleading for me, may yet pretend.

I have minutely told you the whole truth of the case,
To let you see how often the cause of deeds so base
Lies in events concurring which we cannot prevent.
My little ones are now to the workhouse sent,
In which my valiant wife to sorrow did succumb.
I little care if prison or the galleys be my doom—
And even liberty no blessing more affords;
But if it be the scaffold—then take my thanks, my lords.

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